

The University of Chicago

USE OF THE SUBJUNCTIVE AND
THE CONDITIONAL IN
THE *PERLESVAUS*

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES
AND LITERATURES

1936

By
JOHN CARY DAVIS

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PREFACE

This study in its complete form¹ had for object (1) to classify and explain the uses of the subjunctive and the conditional in the Perlesvaus, (2) to compare the practice of this text with general Old French usage, and (3) to note the chief differences between Old French and Modern French subjunctive and conditional uses.

In its present shorter form, the original introduction is preserved intact. It is followed by a concise summary of the most important results obtained, with citation of illustrative examples, each preceded by the line reference in the text (e.g., 3209), and followed by a reference to the scribe in parentheses, e.g. (VI) = Scribe VI.² Lastly, there is a brief conclusion on the general usage and status of the subjunctive and the conditional in the Perlesvaus.

This study was undertaken under the guidance of Professor Hayward Keniston, whose zeal for the study of Syntax constantly attracts new disciples. Without his painstaking and constructive criticism, many problems which arose in the preparation of my thesis would have remained unsolved.

Acknowledgments are also due to Professor W. A. Nitze, whose scholarly interest and achievements in the field of Arthurian Romance first inspired in me the desire to attempt a study in the same field, and to Dr. H. L. Robinson for valuable help on the language of the MSS.³

¹J. C. Davis, "The Use of the Subjunctive and the Conditional in the Perlesvaus," Unpublished Doctor's thesis, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Chicago, 1936.

²For a study of the Scribes, see H. L. Robinson, "The Language of the Scribes of the Oxford Manuscript Hatton 82 (Perlesvaus)," Unpublished Doctor's thesis, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Chicago, 1933.

³For a description of the MSS, see the text of the Perlesvaus, "Introduction": W. A. Nitze and T. A. Jenkins, Le Haut Livre du Graal: Perlesvaus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), Vol. I.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF PERIODICALS
USED IN FOOTNOTES

- AR. Archivum Romanicum.
NIP. Neue Jahrbücher für Pädagogik.
NS. Die neueren Sprachen.
ZfSL. Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur.
ZRPh. Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie.
ZVS. Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft.

INTRODUCTION

The Theory of the Subjunctive

The question of the exact nature of the subjunctive has been a bone of contention among syntacticians for centuries, and will continue to demand investigation and study as long as it functions as a living part of man's speech and writing habits, for its usage, like that of other speech forms, has never remained static, but is in a constant state of evolution. Moreover, since it is a "mood," it is extremely difficult to keep an analysis of it out of the realm of "mood," i.e., the "subjective." Each student of the subjunctive senses keenly the modal feeling imparted by its use, but must fall back, for an explanation of this feeling, upon a highly personal interpretation.

Before attempting to set forth a theory of the subjunctive based upon a study in Old French, it might be well to consider representative ideas expressed by various writers of modern times. These are grouped according to ideas, rather than following a strict chronological order.

Mätzner, author of one of the early modern French grammars says: "Dagegen hat die subjektive Reflexion ihre Stelle da, wo die innere Verbindung der Sätze, der logische Zusammenhang derselben das Interesse beschäftigt, wo die Begriffe der Kausalität, der Bedingtheit oder des Zweckes als der subjektiven Auffassung angehörig dargestellt, oder der Inhalt fremder und eigener Vorstellung seiner Unmittelbarkeit entnommen und gleichsam nur abgespiegelt werden soll."¹ In this one definition can be found the germs for most of the theories offered by later grammarians.

Delbrück states that the subjunctive was in origin an expression of "Will," the optative one of "Wish," and that the Latin subjunctive had to express both these ideas (as well as "Uncertainty").²

¹E. Mätzner, Französische Grammatik (Berlin, 1877), p. 358. Cf. also, idem, Syntax der Neufrz. Sprache (Berlin, 1843, 1845).

²B. Delbrück, "Die Grundbegriffe der Kasus und Modi," NIP, IX (1902), 331. This article does not differentiate clearly

Haas contrasts the indicative and subjunctive: the former deals with pure reality, the latter with reality or possibility conditioned by some other proposition or an emotion.¹

Solltmann unifies all subjunctive uses under the heading of "Uncertainty."² Lerch at first accepts this classification but adds the "Wish-Command" type (Begehrens).³ Later he joins the two under the term "Konjunktiv des psychologischen Subjekts," although even the modern Subjunctive of Emotion probably derives from an expression of will.⁴

Venzke lists the subjunctive as the mood of dependent ("unselbstständigen") clauses.⁵ De Boer takes up this idea; he proposes only two real subjunctive uses: (1) an optative (principal clauses of wish, command, etc.), (2) a subordinative.⁶

Foulet states that the subjunctive, except in clauses of desire, is today being absorbed by the indicative, so that in conversation it is almost a second form of the indicative,⁷ a substitute for it, and in literature, a stylistic device, but that in the Middle Ages it was a vital part of speech, expressing suggestion or doubt as against decided affirmation (indicative).⁸

between the elements of "Will" and "Uncertainty" in the origin of the subjunctive.

¹J. Haas, Französische Syntax (Halle, 1916), p. 421.

²H. Solltmann, Syntax der Modi im modernen Französisch (Halle, 1914), p. 2.

³E. Lerch, Die Bedeutung der Modi im Französisch (Leipzig, 1919), p. 9.

⁴Idem, "Zum Konjunktiv des psychologischen Subjekts im Frz.," NS, XXXVI (1928), 82-83.

⁵P. Venzke, Zur Lehre vom frz. Konjunktiv (Pg. Stargard, 1890), cited by E. Koschwitz, ZfSL, XIII (1891), 224.

⁶C. de Boer, Essais de Syntaxe Moderne (Paris, 1923), pp. 64 ff.

⁷L. Foulet, Petite Syntaxe de l'ancien français (Paris, 1930), pp. 204-205, § 295. M. Regula takes exception to this statement ("Ueber einige Probleme der frz. Syntax," ZfSL, LVII [1935], 360), but examples listed by J. Aymeric as early as the end of the 19th century from modern newspaper articles, of indicatives after craindre, falloir, and vouloir, seem to prove Foulet's assertion ("Evolutions de la langue française," ZfSL, XI [1889], 269).

⁸Ibid., p. 206, § 297.

Sneyders de Vogel looks upon the subjunctive as the mood of eventuality, occupying the middle ground between pure reality and pure unreality--the same ground occupied by the imperative. Thus there are two types of subjunctives, (1) Human Will and (2) Impersonality.¹ Robert makes practically the same classifications (Desire and Possibility).²

Nyrop sums up the indicative as the mood of reality and certainty, while the subjunctive denotes the unreal, the possible, the uncertain, desires, wishes, orders, restriction of the general.³ Philp⁴ and Sorrento⁵ have the same general headings.

In the rise of primitive speech, moods probably developed earlier than tenses. Tenses, says Lerch, are only special kinds or phases of moods.⁶ Thus one should not expect to find the same elaborate tense divisions in all the moods. Most of the Romance Languages, for instance, have felt little need for a future tense in the subjunctive and have found four (approximately) tenses sufficient in this mood.⁷

Originally, all sentences were either statements (exclamations, etc.) or wishes.⁸ All syntax is, in origin, really

¹K. Sneyders de Vogel, Syntaxe historique du française (2d ed.; Groningue [La Haye], 1927), pp. 153-154, § 203.

²C-M. Robert, Questions de grammaire et de langue française (Amsterdam, 1887), p. 186.

³Kr. Nyrop, Grammaire historique de la langue française (Copenhagen, 1899-1930), Vol. VI, p. 276, § 269.

⁴H-W. Philp, Le subjonctif et les grammairiens fr. du 16^e siècle (Stockholm [Upsala dissertation], 1894), p. 15: "L'indicative, c'est le repos de l'esprit dans la vérité, dans la certitude. Le subjonctif est le trouble du cerveau, qui réagit sur les fonctions intellectuelles et engendre le doute, l'insécurité, l'indéterminé, la finalité indécise."

⁵L. Sorrento, "Una particolarità sintattica delle lingue neolatine e un esempio tipico nei Sepolcri," AR, XI (1927), pp. 234-235.

⁶Lerch, Bedeutung der Modi, p. 2. But L. Tobler disagrees with this theory of the origin of tenses ("Uebergang zwischen Tempora und Modi," ZVS, II [1862], 34).

⁷Cf. W. Meyer-Lübke, Grammatik der Romanischen Sprachen (Leipzig, 1899), Vol. III, § 665: "Der Konjunktiv ist der dubitative, das dubitative Element liegt aber auch im Futurum, daher ein Konjunktiv des Futurums überflüssig ist."

⁸Lerch, op. cit., p. 1.

parataxis. All subordinate clauses were originally main clauses, and the familiar que (che) derives probably from an accusative pronoun used in a demonstrative sense¹ (cf. English that, German dasz, and Scandinavian att and som). Old French itself has many examples of paratactic constructions.

Thus the indicative and the imperative must have been the first primitive moods, out of which the other moods grew up.² If primitive man, at the approach of an animal called out "(Tiger) come," he was expressing a statement (ind.). When, however, he addressed another in a peremptory tone of voice: "Come!", he expressed a command in the imperative mood.

The imperative has lived on in direct discourse in modern speech--although replaced in some cases by a more polite, more refined, form (Sp. venga Vd., It. non salire)--but with only one tense and a limited number of persons, supplemented in the 3rd person, and in other persons, in indirect discourse, by a new mood with a complete set of forms, the Optative (subjunctive).

The first indicative tense was surely a present partaking of the nature of a universal. As past--present--future time distinctions arose and man's thought-forms became more complex, there began to appear also subordinate clauses, with restrictions on positive and negative statements, implications of doubt and uncertainty, and a new mood, the Subjunctive.

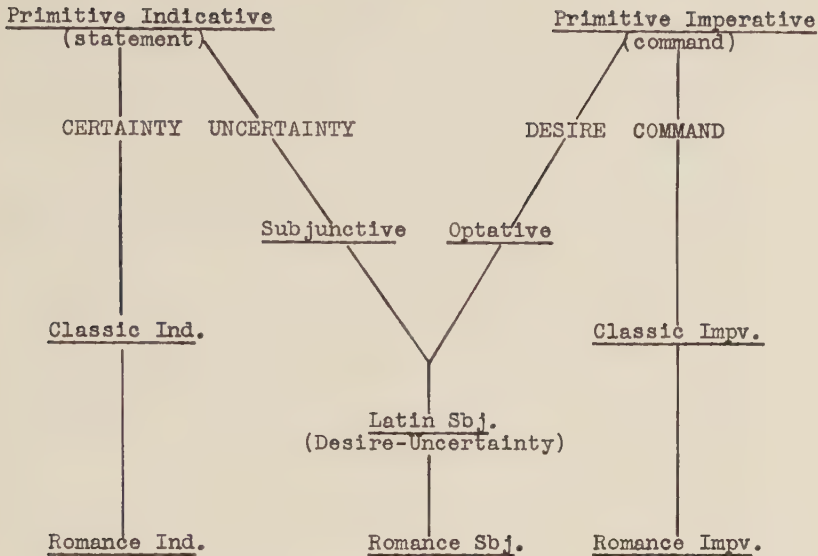
Sanskrit and Greek had both the optative and subjunctive moods, expressing Desire and Uncertainty (and Will), respectively. In Classic Latin, both uses were absorbed by the subjunctive, and this use was inherited by Romance, as can be seen from the diagram on the following page.

The subjunctive, as Meillet states, may have been the origin of the Latin future, in form and usage.³ At least the one

¹Philp, op. cit., p. 12. He refers to special studies.

²In a constant evolution and change, some tenses have themselves developed into moods, notably the Romance conditional. The infinitive is opposed to all the other moods, in that it is an abstraction of the root form of the verb, an impersonal, and strictly speaking, an "absence of mood" (mood in the sense of feeling).

³A. Meillet, Esquisse d'une histoire de la langue latine (Paris, 1928), pp. 22-23. He points out the resemblance between the subjunctive endings, and those of the future of the third and fourth conjugations, e.g., ducam = "I shall lead" and "I may lead."



basic idea underlying both optative and subjunctive is that of uncertainty, (unreality) whether future or present (De Boer: psychological subordination).¹

This basic uncertainty is divided into two fairly distinct groups, distinguished by the personal element in the feeling of uncertainty (wish, optative) or the lack of it (simple [impersonal] uncertainty). There is some overlapping, of course.²

The sub-types under these two general headings group themselves around three different ideas:

1) The subjunctive in French denotes UNREALITY in the form of a) Uncertainty in the future (prospective). This can be expressed as Desire in a wish or command, a verb of fearing, a verb of prevention, a verb of necessity, a purpose clause, a clause of intended result; or it may be Simple Uncertainty after a verb of doubt, an indirect question, a concession, a condition, a proviso, a negative result, a time clause, etc. Examples of

¹De Boer, op. cit., pp. 64 ff.

²Whether one chooses "Desire," "Will," "Uncertainty," "Subordination," "Subjective attitude" as a basic idea (see various studies on the subjunctive) seems to be mainly a matter of emphasis, since this mood can be fitted, by dint of ingenious explanation, into almost any desired category.

of these follow:

- Qu'il vienne! (Wish or command)
Nous voulons qu'elle meure. (Wish)
Je crains qu'on ne m'entende. (Fearing)
Gardez qu'ils ne vous voient. (Prevention)
Il faut que tu finisses. (Necessity)
Vous le ferez pour que je sache le résultat. (Purpose)
On cherche une flèche qui puisse pénétrer le mur. (Intended Result)
Je ne pense pas qu'elle vienne. (Doubt)
Il ne sait qu'il puisse faire. (Indirect question--doubt)
Quoique vous n'y arriviez pas, vous vous amuserez bien. (Concession = Condition)
A condition qu'il ne vienne pas, j'accepte. (Condition)
Il réussira, pourvu qu'on ne l'empêche pas. (Proviso)
Il faut passer par là, sans qu'elle le soupçonne. (Negative Result)
Je le trouverai avant que je ne parte. (Time)

The futurity expressed may be a futurity from the point of view of the past, in which case the sequence becomes a past one, with the subordinate verb still subjunctive.

When the indicative is used for futurity it expresses certainty.

The subjunctive also expresses UNREALITY b) In present time ("inspective"), in clauses of opinion (il semble, etc.), and c) In past time ("retrospective"),¹ in past contrary to fact conditional sentences--a potential subjunctive (in other potential uses, the conditional has replaced the subjunctive).

- Il semble qu'on y ait changé quelque chose. (Opinion)
S'il eût su cela, il fût resté chez lui. (c. t. f.)

Parallel indicative constructions have almost eliminated the second type (condition sentence) in Modern French, and the indicative with il me semble is de rigueur.

2) A very important use of the subjunctive may be labelled RESTRICTION. It may occur in any time and includes members of other groups (futurity, and the like). Many of the clauses are.

¹The terms "prospective" and "retrospective," used to designate the point of view from which one looks at an event, occur in Robert, op. cit., p. 187. "Inspective" was suggested by Professor Hayward Keniston of the University of Chicago, to apply to a contemporary event.

negated. The restrictives follow superlatives, indefinite adjectives, or are clauses of intended result (= "future uncertainty"), negated antecedent, negated attendant circumstance, or the que je sache type of clause (also = "uncertainty"). All the que clauses except the last are closely connected with an antecedent with which they form a compact, inseparable unit, of a general class, as contrasted with the type of particulars, individuals, i.e., "real" objects, denoted by the indicative.

La meilleure piece que j'aie jamais vue. (Superlative)

Donne-moi un livre qui me plaise. (Intended result)

Il n'y a personne qui vous réponde. (Negated antecedent)

Il ne trouva rien, qu'il ne vous expliquât son origine.

(Negated attendant circumstance)

On ne le revit jamais, que je sache. ("que je sache")

3) A third type is that which deals with factual situations (FACT).

a) The subjunctive may concede a fact as true, in clauses of concession. The concession is a grudging one: the speaker or writer has more to add on the subject. In spite of the concession, some other consideration of paramount value invalidates or nullifies the fact conceded ("Even if granted that nevertheless"). The speaker or writer wishes to minimize the importance of the thing conceded, and he does so by putting the verb into the subjunctive. To this extent the fact becomes uncertain.

Bien qu'il ne soit pas riche, je le préfère a tous vos courtiers.¹ (Concession)

b) A modern use of the subjunctive, which apparently grew up as a polite social or courtly way of speaking is that which follows an expression of emotion or which expresses a psychological reaction to a situation. With the same type of clause, in accordance with an arbitrary rule, one uses the subjunctive after que, the indicative after de ce que. Since this construction does not occur with the subjunctive in the Old French of the period of this study, a pair of examples will illustrate the modern usage:

Je m'étonne que vous le trouviez si ennuyeux!

Pour se rendre compte qu'on ait vraiment choisi cette route, il faudrait aller la voir.

¹This type of clause was in origin a "generalized" expression, i.e., Combien (Comment, quoi) qu'il ne soit pas riche = "however (no matter how) rich he is not."

As contrasted with the subjunctive, the uses of the Conditional are much simpler. The conditional is primarily a tense expressing future certainty, when occurring in a past sequence:

Il disait qu'il m'aiderait.

(= Il disait: "Je vous aiderai.")

Secondarily, it is a mood of potentiality in present or past time. It occurs in the conclusion to contrary to fact and future less vivid conditions, or as a simple potential, with unexpressed condition, that may denote ability, modesty, obligation, possibility, and other modal implications according to the type of verb (modal auxiliary or verb of action and state). Only in conditional sentences has the Old French conditional invaded the field of the subjunctive; in very recent times in vulgar speech it has begun to replace the subjunctive in almost every type of clause (see p. 2, n. 7).

Nous le ferions volontiers. (potential)

Je voudrais vous parler. (potential = wish)

Vous devriez y aller. (potential = obligation)

Si elle avait de l'argent, nous dînerions bien ce soir!
(c. t. f. conditional sentence)

Il n'y a rien qu'il ne ferait pas pour nous. (Modern)

Table of Subjunctive and Conditional Ideas¹

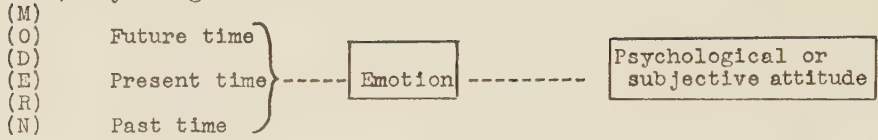
SUBJUNCTIVE (Basic Uncertainty)		
Types	<u>Desire</u>	<u>Simple Uncertainty</u>
1) <u>Unreality</u>		
a) Future time ² (prospective) -----	Optative Wish or Command Fear Necessity Purpose Intended result etc.	Doubt Indirect question Condition Proviso Negative result Time etc.
b) Present time (inspective) -----		Opinion: <u>il semble</u> , etc. <u>cuidier</u> <u>ne croire</u> etc.
c) Past time (retrospective) -----		c. t. f. conditions
2) <u>Restriction (class idea)</u>		
a) Future time -----	Intended result	Superlative Indefinite antecedent Negated antecedent Negated attendant circumstance <u>que je sache</u> etc.
b) Present time -----		
c) Past time -----		
3) <u>Fact</u>		
a) Concessive:		
Future time } Present time } Past time }		Concession: <u>bien que</u> <u>quoi que</u> <u>encore que</u> etc.

¹For a different table, based upon grammatical and psychological subordination, see M. Regula, "Ueber die Modale und Psychodynamische Bedeutung der frz. Modi im Nebensatz," ZRPh, XLV (1925), 138.

²Not tense. The word TENSE refers to a verb form; TIME may be involved in both thought and form. Thus "Je vais demain" is present tense but future time, while "J'irai" is both future tense and time.

3) Fact (Continued)

b) Psychological:



INDICATIVE

1) Certainty

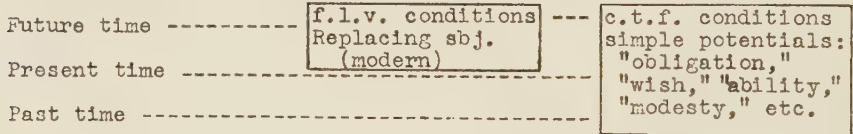


CONDITIONAL

1) Certainty (tense)



2) Potentiality (mood)



SUBJUNCTIVE AND CONDITIONAL USAGE
IN THE PERLESVAUS

A concise summary of the results of this study with examples of the more important constructions is as follows:

I. SUBJUNCTIVE: Principal Clauses of Desire (Wishes and Commands)

In the Perlesvaus, introductory que occurs only twice, both examples highly questionable, while, si, or, and other adverbs or conjunctions are very common as introductory words.

1493 "On m'apele Gavain, le neveu le roi Artu.--Or tost, sire, font il, que bien puissiez vos estre venuz!" (I)

6992 "Laisons les dormir, que Dex nos desfemde de tel hoste." (VI) (que = car?)

2958 "Or doinse Dex qu'il ne m'ocie, ne je lui!" (IV)

3935 "... et Dex nos en achat vengeance." (IV)

All the si m'aït Diex ("so help me God") examples have this inverted form, evidence that the si was felt to be an adverb (= sic) and not the conjunction "if." There are no se (= "if") spellings.

518 "Si m'aït Dex, fet ele, or vos haz plus que devant ..." (I)

4228 "Si m'aït Dex, sire, fet ele, je ne sai." (IV)

Greetings, many of them stereotyped phrases, often have their reply in inverted form: a type of chiasmus.

8463 "Ha! sire, fet il, bien soiez vos venuz!--Dex vos otroit santé hastivement," fait Lanceloz. (III)

Some of the commands, especially with imperatives of estre, avoir, have accompanying oaths (por Dieu, etc.) that lend them a quality of prayer.

2911 "Sire chevalier, por Dieu, aiez merci de vos meisme." (III)

II. SUBJUNCTIVE: Subordinate Clauses

A. Desire

1. Noun Clauses:

Most impersonal expressions of necessity (noun subject clauses) take both subjunctive and infinitive constructions. Il covient, however, almost invariably governs an infinitive.

9046 "A! sire, fait il a Perlesvaus, retournez ariere;
il ne nos est mestier d'aler plus avant." (VII)
(inf.)

9682 "Sire, fet ele, mestier m'esteroit que g'en
eüsse plus que ge n'oi de la joie ..." (VIII)
(sbj.)

4983 "... car se madame ma mere pert sun chastel, il
nos couvendra estre en estranges terres ..." (V)
(inf.)

Impersonal expressions of emotion (il me poise, etc.) take the indicative, except those denoting will or desire (il me tarde, il me plese) which are naturally followed by the subjunctive.

1735 "Sire fet li borjois, ce poise moi que vos avez
si megre cheval ..." (I) (emotion)

3685 "... je voil servir ma dame la roïne tant com
li plera que je soie ses bien voillanz." (IV)
(wish)

In object clauses, following verbs of entreaty, command, wish, and the like, the subjunctive in direct discourse is rivalled by a hypotactic imperative, often with both constructions within a few sentences of each other. Forms in -ez (-oiz) are indeterminate: they may be either imperative or subjunctive. All 1st and 3rd persons, and all past tenses are, of course, subjunctive.

1712 "Sire, ge vos pri que vos me dites qex chastiax
ce est ci." (I) (impv.)

3049 "... si vos pri, sire, que vos me façoez
chevalier ..." (III) (sbj.)

7906 ... li rois li escria qu'il ne l'oceïst mie.
(III) (sbj.)

8989 "... la Damoisele del Char ... vos mande par
moi ... que vos li alez reconquerre les
chiés ..." (VIII) (= mood?)

All expressions of emotion, whether followed by que or de ce que, take the indicative, except expressions of fearing, which really contain a wish, as shown by the everpresent ne.

815 "Sire, dont me tieng ge a conquis, e molt sui
dolanz que ge no soi ainçois que me fusse
mellez a vos." (I) (emotion)

87 "Si é grant poor que Dex ne vos ait mis en obli."
(I) (sbj.) (fear)

2. Adjective Clauses:

Clauses of intended result of the type tel ... qui govern the subjunctive. They are "characteristic" clauses, demanding not a specific object, but one of a class.

3852 "Et Dex vos lest trover tel chevalier qui puist
abatre les outrages qui sont en vostre cuer et
le sien." (IV)

There is one example of a purpose clause (par coi); it takes the subjunctive.

- 189 "... Dex soit garde de vos ... e vos doinst
volenté de bien fere, par coi vostre los soit
essaucié ..." (I)

3. Adverbial Clauses:

Clauses of intended result take the subjunctive if they express a striving toward a goal, a desired end; the indicative denotes a result sure to follow (future ind.).

- 6647 Li rois ... e Misire Gavains ... proient au
Sauveor dou mont que il puist garantir son cors
e sa vie si que il le puisent vooir prochaine-
ment. (VI) (sbj.)
- 1748 "Certes, sire, fet il, vos me sanblez estre si
preudom que vos me tendriez bien ce que vos
m'avriez en covent." (ind.)

Clauses of purpose take the subjunctive. A special group following verbs of command and the like are very close to (noun) object clauses in feeling, since que is a very common conjunction of purpose. The conjunction por ce que is very often separated into por ce ... que; the mood alone shows that the clause is not causal.

- 9280 "... si les me covient ci eleques garder .xl.
jorz, c'on nes despende." (III)
- 7534 "... e por ce vos ai je garanti la vie, que vos
m'otroiez vostre amor ..." (VI)

B. Uncertainty

1. Noun Clauses:

Impersonal expressions of possibility take the subjunctive only if negative, the indicative if affirmative. Those of opinion vary according to the amount of personal conviction implied: ce (il) semble regularly has the subjunctive, (il) me semble regularly the indicative; with a 3rd person pronoun (or noun)--il li semble, the construction wavers from doubt or false belief (sbj.) to assurance (ind.). (M')est avis and pert bien take the indicative; the latter may mean to be apparent. Negated or doubtful expressions of certainty have the subjunctive.

- 4163 "Par mon chief, fet [la roïne], il puet molt
bien estre qu'ele est sa suer ..." (IV) (ind.)
- 6550 "Il n'avendra pas, se Deu plaist, que nos
preïgnon tel servise de vos." (VI) (sbj.)
- 5084 ... ce sembloit que toute la forest acraventast.
(V) (sbj.)
- 964 "Damoisele, fet il, moi sanble que vos n'estes
pas tres bien lisee." (I) (ind.)

9242 "Aprés me fu avis que je le vi despendre de la croiz." (III) (ind.)

5188 "Est-ce voirs, fet Perlesvaus, que il soit morz?" (V) (sbj. - question form)

Certain expressions of doubt or belief take the subjunctive. In affirmative verbs, cuidier alone takes the subjunctive; it may also have the indicative expressing a slightly more certain belief. Penser and verbs of swearing, promising, etc., take the indicative.

6425 "Je cuit, fait Misire Gavains, quant il sont mort que nos n'avon garde d'eaus." (VI) (ind.)

8880 Li pluisor cuiderent que il fust des chevaliers Aristors. (VII) (sbj.)

6203 Il voit que li lion pense que il sont traïtor e desloial ... (VI) (ind.)

Negated expressions of belief, on the other hand, are regularly subjunctive. Negation may be only implied through an interrogative form, a condition (if), or a subjunctive verb may reflect its mood into the following clause.

1849 "Par foi, fet l'ainznee, ge ne croi pas q'il doie oster la mauvese costume ..." (I)

891 "Cuidiez vos q'il le vos die, ne q'il le sache?" (I) (question)

8032 "Se je voi que il ait tort, je li proierai de l'adrecier ..." (III) (condition)

1666 "... si ne voldroie pas qu'il seüst qu'il eüst nul chevalier en cest porpris ..."

 (I) (sbj. reflection)

Indirect questions that refer to actual situations, facts, or future certainties require the indicative. Only clauses of the type il ne sait que (comment) may take the subjunctive (or an infinitive as alternate form); these express doubt as to a future course.

2156 "... ne ne sai que ce puet estre." (II) (ind.)

8891 Ele ne set qu'ele puist faire. (VII) (sbj.)

7398 "Sire, fait Lanceloz, il est vespres, ne je ne sarole hui mais o aler ..." (VI) (inf.)

2. Adjective Clauses:

Clauses of the tel (tant) ... com type, with the uncertainty involved in the relative itself regularly take the indicative; they compare two actual facts or situations.

3205 "Et vos avrez, fet il, tel guerredon con vos avez deservi ainz que vos partez de ça dedenz." (IV)

Concessives ("whoever," etc.) are of two distinct types:

(1) qui que, quel que, quoi que (que que) and the like, which mean "no matter who [what]" and take the subjunctive; (2) ce que, cil qui, li (il) ... qui, etc., which refer to specified objects, "whatever" (= that specified thing which), "whoever," "which ever one" (a definite group in mind); these always have the indicative.

3270 "... qui que demaint duel, je feré joie por vostre venue." (IV)

8224 "... vos m'eüstes en covent que le chevalier qui le sacheroit me feroit ce que je li requerroie ..." (III)

There are few examples of expressed indefinite antecedents; along with negated antecedents (ne ... qui [ne] ...) they always take the subjunctive. Negation may be implied by a question, a condition, a comparative, a special word, or be a case of subjunctive reflection.

9500 "... vos ne m'avez fete chose de coi j'oe blasmae ..." (VIII) (negated)

778 "... ge le verroie plus volentiers que home qui vive." (I) (comparative)

The same type with a second relative clause (ne ... qui ... qui [ne]), a quantitative determinant, occurs with the subjunctive (2 examples). In each case the secondary relative clause precedes the primary.

7195 "... il n'estoit riens ou monde qui i faillist, qui covenist a cors de bone gent." (VI)

This last group (negated antecedents), together with superlatives, make up a restrictive-of-the-general type, to which adjective clauses of intended result also belong. The superlative plus the relative clause forms a unit denoting a class, and therefore takes the subjunctive. All superlatives are followed by que clauses or a phrase like du monde (also restrictive); many of these are stereotyped from constant use. Verb agreement in number in un des plus ... examples may be with the singular un (agreement with class). There is one example of the superlative without the article. Of the few indicative examples, the majority are non-restrictive.

1618 "... la plus bele terre du mont e les plus beles praeries que nus veïst onques." (I)

795 "... plus povres e plus estroez que ge onques mes veisse ..." (I)

3542 "... une des plus beles damoiseles qui soit ou roiaume ..." (IV) (singular agreement)

1993 "... la plus riche espee du monde, que il a ..." (I) (ind. = non-restrictive)

The exclusives (le premier, etc.) regularly have the indicative.

2510 "Au premier pont ou vos vendroiz vos faura." (III)

3. Adverbial Clauses:

Cause occurs with the subjunctive only when negated (ne ... pour ce que).

8089 "Je ne le di mie por ce que Lanceloz ait garde du roi Claudas, cors a cors, ..." (III)

Concessives have the subjunctive. The commoner conjunctions are encore and comment que; there are also examples of tant, tot, and combien que.

9135 Encore fust il en itele maniere, ne pooit ele mie reffraindre son cuer de lui ... (VII)

9308 "... vos avez fait molt grant bien, comment q'il en aviege apres ..." (III)

The only type of exception is se ... ne, the condition form (subjunctive).

5969 ... ne onques nus ne pot entrer avec aus que il ne fust ocist e detrenciés, se il ne creüst fermement en Deu. (VI)

Imaginative comparison regularly has the subjunctive. The conjunction is some form of com se; the se clause is, of course, contrary to fact. There is one indicative example, which is in direct discourse (the others are in narrative past sequences).

8163 Li carliax estoit autresi comme se il fust tot d'or ... (III) (sbj.)

5167 "... Dex l'en sache autresi buen gré comme s'il le fesoit." (V) (ind.)

Real comparison of the as ... as type (aussi ... com, au plus ... que, etc.) have only the indicative. The plus ... que (more ... than) type has the subjunctive only six times: 2 potentials (regularly subjunctive), 2 impf. sbjs., which may be errors (inverse s, -ust for -u), and 2 undoubtedly present examples (in VII--this scribe may be Picard.)¹

3293 La roïne volsist que Perlesvax se fiast plus en li qu'il ne fesoit ... (V) (ind.)

9189 "Dame, sa vertuz e sa poissanz est assez graindre que l'on ne die." (VII) (sbj.)

Imminence (pres va que ne, a poi que ne, etc.) always takes the indicative; the ne makes a very strong negative state-

¹MSS C and P, who exhibit strongly Picard spellings, each have five additional examples, hence this subjunctive usage is probably a Picard trait.

ment, and the whole phrase is equivalent to the adverb "almost" ("but did not").

- 3285 La roïne l'esgarda enmi le vis et esprent de
s'amor si durement que pres va qu'ele ne li
cort seure. (IV) (ind.)

Place: ou que ("no matter where") and ne ... la ou ("not any where") are found with the subjunctive (cf. qui que concessive type). Ne ... la ou in the meaning of "not as long as (if)" also occurs with the subjunctive (cf. temporal clauses with ne ... tant com).

- 520 "... il ne se movra a piece seus de Cardueil,
la o il puist." (I) ("as long as")
619 "... ge ne puis descendre la o il et chevalier
..." (I) ("anywhere where")
10094 "... ge nes cuit jamés veoir; e o que ge soie,
ge seré leur bien vueillanz ..." (I) ("wherever")

All clauses of Proviso but two (= conditional) take the subjunctive. The commonest conjunctions are par si que, par issi que, por que, por ce que; there are also examples of mais que, por coi, par ainsi que, por tant que, poruec com, puis que.

- 3045 "Autresi feroie je, fet li rois, par si que mal
ne l'en venist ..." (IV)

The loose adverbial construction ne ..., que je sache ("not . . . , as far as I know") has the subjunctive; it is always negated. There are two examples in the Perlesvaus, one of them in MS Br.

- 4044 "Onques mes ne le vi, que je sache." (IV)

Result clauses with negation, expressed or implied, have the subjunctive. Regular affirmative examples after si ... que, tel ... que, etc. have the indicative. An accomplished fact is, of course, also indicative.

- 6953 Misire Gavains ... fait si bien c'a paine puet
nus endurer ses cous. (VI) (ind.)
10084 "Ja ne serez, fet Brudans, si hardiz que vos
alez cuer de moi envair." (I) (sbj.) (negative)

The special type of result clauses called "negated attendant circumstance" (ne ..., que ... ne) always takes the subjunctive; the que ... ne is equivalent to sans ("without") + inf.

- 8743 "... chevaliers ne puet passer parmi ceste
forest ... que II nel voelle ocirre." (VII)

Temporal clauses fall into four groups. (1) Priority: ainz que, ançois que, and avant que (only one ex.) regularly have

the subjunctive; these all mean "before." The "until" group (devant, jusc'a l'heure que, tresqu'a, etc.), which are usually negated, express certainty with a future indicative, uncertainty with a subjunctive, usually as a result of modal reflection from an auxiliary, a subjunctive, an imperative or the like. All past sequences are indicative.

5659 "Si fu devisé, ainz que l'asemblee commençast,
que li mierz fesant vegeroit cel chevalier."
(V) (sbj.) ("before")

7959 "... ne jamés ne verra cler devant a icele heure
qu'ele crera en Dieu ..." (III) (ind.) ("not . .
. . until")

8340 "Gardez que vos ne vos movoiz tresqu'a icele
eure que je sache qui li chevaliers est" (III)
(modal reflection) ("not until")

(2) Simultaneity ("as," "while"): this group always has the indicative.

2048 Si com il s'en aloit, il chiét atot Monseigneur
Gavaïn e fu desoz ... (II)

(3) Subsequence ("when," "after," "as soon as"): this type is regularly indicative.

8707 "Damoisele, fait Perlesvax, a meschief doinst
Dex qu'il vaigne gant il vendra." (VII)

(4) Duration ("as long as"): in this type ("tant com," etc.), most past sequences have the indicative; likewise, any affirmative present sequence. Only negated present sequences (a few past sequences) take the subjunctive; this is a type of restrictive like the "negated antecedent" type.

3982 "... je vos desfi tant com vos le guerroierez
..." (IV) (ind.) (affirmative)

1864 "... la mauvese costume ne puet estre osté tant
com il soit en vie ..." (I) (sbj.) (negative)
(Tense sequence)

Tense sequence shows no great irregularity. Through its constant use in present sequences, the perfect tense (ind. and sbj.) is clearly still a present tense at this time.

III. MODAL AUXILIARIES

Examples of devoir in the subjunctive occur in which the auxiliary seems a unit with the following infinitive. Many examples of the imperfect indicative of devoir + inf. seem equivalent to the conditional of that infinitive.

8902 ... e cuidoît bien que jamais ne la deüst voir.
(VII)

9416 ... car il ne savoît en quel terre il devoit
ariver (= ariveroit) ... (III)

Examples of pooir occur mostly in phrases of welcome ("Bien puissiez vos venir") and prayers ("Diex vos puist aidier!"), where the auxiliary surely has no real function of its own.

701 "Damoisele, bien puissiez vos venir e la vostre compeigne." (I)

5038 "Dex me puist saver ma vie anuit et mun sens ..."

IV. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

Future less vivid clauses are regularly indicative (impf. ind. - pres. cond.). Mixed times and tenses show time shifts in thought.

7167 "Sire, fait Lanceloz au roi, se il vos plaisoit e a Misire Gavain, je m'en iroie vers Cardueil ..." (VI)

8704 "... se il vos het de noient, si vos seüst vos autre ou vos tierz, si venroit il maintenant ..." (VII) (mixed)

Contrary to fact clauses in present time are regularly either indicative (impf. ind. - pres. cond.) or subjunctive (2 impf. sbj.) types. In past time, there is only one example of the indicative (plupf. ind. - past cond.) (Scribe VII). The compound pluperfect subjunctive is gaining in use, appearing in one or both clauses. The simple form of the pluperfect subjunctive (= impf. sbj.) is still retained in some verbs, especially auxiliaries (which have no real time of their own). All but a few of the compound forms are in verbs of action and state, which lend themselves more easily to time analysis.

3591 "Par mon chief, fet Lanceloz, je voi bien que se vos ne fussiez hermites que vos feüssiez tot tel." (IV) (pres.) (sbj.)

7608 "Al dame, fait il, se je ne dotoie le blasme de la gent, ja ne vouroie jamais partir de cest liu." (VI) (pres.) (ind.)

9038 Il set bien que se il avoit esté au chastel le Noir Hermite qu'il avroit auques achevé de sa besoigne. (VII) (past) (ind.)

6503 "Seignors, fait la da[moisele], se cel son ne fust oïz, a painne peüssiez durer ..." (VI) (past) (2 impf. sbjs.--auxiliary verbs)

6721 "... e se vos eüssiez failli de revenir au jor ausi com li autre, nos eüson ceste cité perdue sanz recovrier ..." (VI) (past) (2 plupf. sbjs.--verbs of action)

9247 "En icel saignor doit on croire, car il sofri la mort, q'il eüst bien eschiuee se il vousist ..." (III) (past) (impf. + plupf. sbjs.--auxiliary verb + verb of action)

In the "statement qualified" type, the subj. condition (c.t.f.) always follows the conclusion (= ind. statement).

2267 "... e est avironé de granz eues e plenteüreuses
de toz biens, se li sires fust en joie." (III)

Conditional sentences with a second condition, either se repeated or que + subj., are also found. In the subjunctive examples (no que used), the condition precedes the conclusion, in the indicative examples, it follows. The subjunctives are all of the "restricted" type.¹ One of the indicatives repeats the se (alternate type), two do not (1 alternate, 1 restricted).

Apparently, the scribes of this period already had the modern feeling for the distinction between these two construction,

(1) repeated se (alternate), (2) (que) and subj. (restricted).

4214 "Se il venoit et el le poist tenir, ... il n'en
istroit jamais ..." (IV) (Restricted)

8053 "... li rois Claudas avroit tort s'il vos en
portoit haine, ne ne gerroioit." (III) (alternate)

Conditional sentences, in which the mood of one clause (conclusion) is determined by an external factor are of the following types: (1) Both clauses subjunctive--these are mostly past contrary to fact and would normally take the subjunctive anyway; (2) Conclusion alone subjunctive--these are future less vivid, and this feeling is strong enough in the condition to resist subjunctive attraction; (3) Condition alone subjunctive--the indicative here seems due to il li semble. In all of these, order apparently plays no part.

239 ... il n'est hom tant iriez, s'il oïst la voiz de
la dame, qui n'eüst joie. (I) (c.t.f.)

4761 "Ele me proia ... que se je vos trouvoie ... que
je vos deisse ausi com il li est couvent." (IV)
(f.l.v.)

4684 Il ne volt retourner vers la cort le roi Artu, que
s'il alast ariere en tel point, il li semble que
ce seroit grant blasme a son oes. (IV) (c.t.f.--
governed by il li semble)

Examples of inversion replacing se (= ne fust (il) ...) are all subjunctive and negative (usually ne fust ... por), even if the conclusion is indicative.

¹By "restricted" type the following is meant: the if clause alone is insufficient to express the complete condition required by the conclusion; with the addition of a que clause (subj.), the condition becomes complete and might be called a complex condition: i.e., the two clauses (se ... and que ...) form a unit of thought. The "alternate" type, which usually repeats the se (= "if") has two conditions, which are practically equivalent, and sufficient for the conclusion--a compound condition.

- 9654 "Sire, fet Perlesvaus, ge revenré molt volentiers;
ne james ne m'en queisse partir ne fust por
madame ma mere ..." (VIII)

Double conclusions usually occur in conversational style,
and following the condition(s).

- 8367 "Se vos ne l'eüssiez devers vos, vos ne
partissoiz mie de çaienz a vostre volenté,
ançois eüsse tot mon plaisir de vos, e si vos
en feïsse porter en mon chastel, donc james ne
vos meusöiz por nul pooir, si fusse quite de
la garde de ceste chapele ..." (III)

V. CONDITIONAL

Tense:

As a tense, the conditional is a past future in use.

- 3770 "Il ... m'ot ier en covent qu'il me prendroit
a feme ..." (IV)

Mood (POTENTIAL):

The conditional expresses present or future potentiality.
Modal and copulative auxiliaries do not have frequent compound
forms. In order to express more exactly a past time, perfect
forms of the infinitive may be used, e.g., porroit faire (= "could
do"), porroit avoir fet (= aurait pu faire, "could have done").

- 8730 "Damedex l'en savroit molt bon gré." (VII)
(f.l.v. potential)

- 6322 "Par mon cief, je qui rois sui, ne vouroie mie
avoir le cofre overt ..." (VI) (modal + perf.
inf.)

Modals may express various shades of meaning (pooir:
ability, possibility, permission, probability, etc.). They may
be used in modest requests and statements, many of which are
stereotyped.

- 1629 "Sire, on l'apele Par-lui-fet, la o il est.--Et
o est il? porroie le ge savoir?" (I)
(Permissibility-modest)

- 8735 "E ou est ore vostre sire? fait Perlesvaus.
Savriez m'en vos dire noveles?" (VII) (Modest-
stereotyped)

Past conditional forms occur rarely, except as reflected
from a preceding conditional; they are usually replaced by
imperfect subjunctives.

- 9728 "... e il lor dist qu'il ne se partiroit de la
terre si en avroit fet son pooir." (VIII)
(reflected)

- 769 "Messire Gauvains, fet la damoisele, or poez vos
savoir que vostre force ne vausist ci gaires."
(I) (sbj., rather than the conditional avroit
valu)

Subjunctives may also replace other potential conditionals.

- 3671 "Ha! sire, fet Lanceloz, il a tant de beauté en lui et valor et sens et cortoisie que nus que ele vousist amer ne le devroit lessier." (IV) (sbj., replacing voudroit)

The use of volentiers (or -enviz) frequently adds a wish element to potentials (Je le feroie mout volentiers, "I'd be very glad to do it").

- 8347 "... fu tel heure que je le vos demandasse a enviz." ("... there was a time when I shouldn't have wanted to ask it of you.") (III)
- 4501 "Sire, fet Lanceloz, je le verroie mout volentiers." ("... I'd certainly be glad to see him.") (IV)

Most potentials have a condition, implied or replaced by some equivalent construction. The types of replacement are many and varied: nouns, pronouns, adjectives, infinitives, adverbial phrases, clauses of many kinds.

- 1944 "Sire, por ce que ge sé bien que vos avroiz l'espee e ne revendriez pas par moi." (I) (Clause, equivalent to se vos av[is]ez ... [ne revendriez])
- 4784 "Mes qui me diroit noveles ... , je les oroie mout volentiers." (IV) (Relative, equivalent to se quelqu'un me disoit ...)
- 2374 "Ne vos ne autre ne poist çaienz entrer sanz l'espee." (III) (Adverbial phrase equivalent to se vos n'eüssiez ...)
- 280 "Damoisele, se Dieu plect, vos me verrez reperier. --Je en seroie mout liee ..." (I) (Pronoun, equivalent to se je vos veoie reperier [je seroie ...])

Only certain special modals and other verbs such as je devroie ("I ought"), je voudroie ("I should like"), etc., have developed a potential not requiring or necessarily implying a condition.¹

Conclusion

Comparison with other Old French texts shows that the Perlesvaus is an excellent representative of Old French prose, as far as use of moods is concerned. Erratic indicative tense shifts (present historical to past sequences) are common to all the scribes of MS O, but, in contrast, the subjunctive and conditional syntax is quite consistent. These scribes--unlike those of the other MSS (notably C)--apparently have a clear concept of modal

¹For examples, see pouvoir (1629), savoir (8730, 8735), and voloir (6322), in lines cited on the preceding pages.

usage, which precludes throughout any haphazard choice of mood and tense. None of the eight scribes of O show any very exceptional dialectal syntactic peculiarities, outside of a few possibly Picard traits, exhibited also by C and P.

The author of the Perlesvaus as represented in O, is a careful stylist: Where a choice of moods is possible, he often displays a sensitive feeling for subjunctive nuances, which make all the difference between a finely written paragraph and a group of prosaic sentences (for example, Gauvain's vision of the Grail). In addition, he presents a variety of modal expressions that enlivens above all the conversational passages. To be sure, certain stereotyped uses are found, but they are those most naturally occurring in all languages (greeting, wishes, etc.). MS P quite often agrees with O in modal use, while Br seems to be ignorant of the finer shadings and appears to atone for this by using the subjunctive in the most unexpected places.

The main outlines of Modern French subjunctive uses are already clearly discernible in the Perlesvaus, and its conditional uses are practically the same as those of today. The subjunctive, however, was more virile, more alive, and less a stylistic device than in Modern French. For instance, the modern emotional-psychological type was unknown. The indicative was a factual, a specific mood, whereas the subjunctive dealt only with uncertainties and generalized ideas. The imperative was closer to the latter mood in feeling and use than was the indicative. Furthermore, the subjunctive still occupied many a field that was later to be taken over by the infinitive. Compound tenses of both the subjunctive and the conditional were still in an early stage of development.

We may conclude from this study that in the matter of modal syntax, the Perlesvaus is in essential accord with general Old French usage, which was more a matter of individual choice, and hence less artificial, than today.

